



Philosophy of Logic

Willard Van Orman Quine

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With his customary incisiveness, W. V. Quine presents logic as the product of two factors, truth and grammar--but argues against the doctrine that the logical truths are true because of grammar or language. Rather, in presenting a general theory of grammar and discussing the boundaries and possible extensions of logic, Quine argues that logic is not a mere matter of words.

Philosophy of Logic Details

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Connor Brown says

This is a very good introduction to logic. Quine deals with technical details, as well as the considerations that go into navigating these technicalities this way or that way. I picked at "The Logic Book" but was always confused over just why these connectives and those operations were considered to be THE elements of logic. Surely, you can "see" it, and rationalize it, but anything that claims the mantle of logic must be rigor itself; I don't want to hear some appeal to it's pleasing simplicity or striking character that decides it so.

Quine maps out the establishment of a logical language, showing various dead ends that might make the language trip over itself, as well as examples of various deviant logics that take different premises and move different directions. In doing so, he separates symbolic logic from the philosophy of logic, which is essential to understanding the whole package. Everything one might see in "The Logic Book" is the most neutral logical language that was produced by a intense, century long and highly technical debate.

Quine, though biased, does a very good job of showing how much is up the the air in this field, and the type of considerations that go into the construction of logical languages which otherwise seem monolithic and inscrutable.

John says

Kind of dull, I didn't get the sense of vibrant engagement with the subject matter that Quine usually provides. Perhaps I've just been reading too much about logic these days.

Crito says

For those passing through, this isn't an introduction to logic, that's for something like Jeffrey's Formal Logic: Its Scope and Limits. But you can still hold onto this, because once you understand the symbol manipulation, then philosophical issues, soundness and completeness of a system, interpretation, validity and logical truth all come into focus. This is Quine's own take on it. He'll bring up figures like Tarski and Godel to develop his ideas more so than to elaborate on theirs. The value of this is as a model example for approaching these questions, and his semantic ascent is interesting in itself.

Parnell says

An excellent book, the author is a lucid writer and powerful logician, no doubt. Be sure to brush up on your basic symbolic logic at first though as he uses some symbolic expressions for his key arguments (and they are necessary to understand his reasoning).
